

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, May 8. 1707.

I Was talking to the poor deluded or prejudic'd Enemies of the Union in my last, concerning the Jealousies they pretend to raise of their Brethren in *England*: If they would impartially weigh what is before them, as to the Manner of their Behaviour on both sides, now the thing is over, they would find, their immediate duty is to acquiesce, in what Providence has thought fit to bring to pass in this Affair, and to act as becomes Christians to their Brethren, from whom tho' they may differ, yet they are far from being now in any Danger.

The Principles and the Establishment of either Party are fix'd; these are acknowledged, and those secur'd——Now I wish, a new Contention would arise, I mean, such as the Struggle of every Party to demonstrate the Goodness of their Principles by the Soundness of their Practice; that

every Sort of Christians, *since it is our Unhappiness to be plac'd in Sorts*, might contend only in this, who shall recommend their Party most by the Heavenly Illustrations of Love, Charity, and a strict Conversation.

That they may debate, who shall discourage Vice most, and reform the Nation they live in by their Example; who shall put the Laws in Execution most against the general Defection of Manners, and suppress the Debaucheries of the Age.

If this were set about heartily, the Spirit of Strife, Jealousie and Distrust would soon decay among us; and who knows what farther Union this may produce in Time? Who knows what remains behind the Curtain of inscrutable Providence, and what this first Union may be an Introduction to, when all agree to a general Reformation both in Principle and Practice, when every Tree, that

that our Heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted out? What remaining Difference can there be to assist the most contentious Inclination in keeping up the Breach?

I care not to prophesie, what is only in Hope; but sure I may be allow'd to determine this, that there is every jott as great a Probability, that the present united Circumstances of this Island should have some extraordinary Effect on the Temper, Manners and Inclinations of the People tending to their own Happiness, as that it should produce all the melancholly Possibilities, which the chagrin, illegmatick Suggestions of discontented People have suggested.

I believe, there is no body but will sincerely say, they wish it may be so, and I must add it is our own inexcusable Folly, if it is not so; since nothing but our Passions and Want of Charity to one another can interrupt it, and wo be to them by whom this Offence cometh.

The reciprocal Duty here, therefore in Matters of Religion, is mutual Charity, Forbearance, Love to one another, and a general Confidence in each other; and of this I hope, I need say no more, than that 'tis the way to render the Union effectual, and to make it a Blessing to both Nations; and so I end the Article of Religion.

I might say a Word to some honest good Folk, that cry out still to have the Union broke again, tell us, they hope to see it unravell'd yet, and all the Work to be done another Way.

What way they mean, I confess, I think is not worth while to examine, nor can they give any good Account of their own Wishes that way; for if they come carefully to examine the Consequences of these things, they run themselves upon some Rocks and Precipices, which in their more calm Use of their Sences they dare not wish to see their Country, nor their Church brought to.

But I'll wave that, and only say a Word by way of Enquiry to such People; You would have it broke again, pray, who would you have break it? It would be a wicked

Desire, and such as no Christian can justify to say, you would have the *English* break Faith with you, invade your Liberties, and make good the Suggestions of a Party among us, by proving Tyrants to enslave you— And if you could entertain so loose a Desire, it would not answer your End, for it would never come to pass.

To say you would break it your selves, is to say, you would fly in the Face of a legal just Power, which is the Ordinance of GOD, and would be not Rebellion against your Prince only, but against GOD also, and would be a ready Step to your own and your Neighbour's Destruction; to such bewildred Extremes do such poor People run themselves, and so weakly fill their Heads with Notions, which expose them to the greatest Absurdities.

The best Advice to be given such People, is, that they would apply themselves to the more reasonable and Christian Practice of improving the Union to the general Advantage of themselves and their Posterity, that they may not rob themselves of the Blessing, and have the Mortification of seeing every body made happy but themselves.

I believe they may be assur'd, the Union is fix'd beyond the Power of human or infernal Instruments to dissolve; that *Gordian* Knot, I dare say, will never be untied, but by the general Conflagration of all things, as long as *Britain* stands unconquer'd by foreign Power; and as long as her Inhabitants have Eyes in their Heads, and their Understandings are in Exercise, 'tis impossible it should be broke; the Nations must be Lunatick and *Felo de se*, whenever they go about it, and being abandon'd of Heaven and their own Wits, must be left a Prey to every Devourer.

It is impossible, it can ever happen without a universal Convulsion, and overturning all Manner of Government, Order, or Settlement in this Part of the World—

And I cannot but refer it to their own more serious Consideration, what strange preposterous Notions such things are founded upon!

MISCELLANEA.

IN speaking of the Severities us'd in these *Southern Parts* of this Island against the unfortunate Debtor, I took Occasion to recognize the general Justice of the Nation in its proper Execution, and to say that it was necessary here, the trading Circumstances of this Kingdom consider'd, to subject the Person, as well as the Estate of every Tradesman, to the Creditor, which I desire now to explain a little.

I know it is the Custom in other Countries, and by our former Laws in *England*, the Body of the Debtor could not be detain'd.

In *Scotland* to this Hour, no Man can be arrested in *mean Process*; and if when Judgment is obtain'd, and Execution taken out, which they call a *Charge of Horning*, the Defendant may be incarcerated; there are two such Circumstances attending it, as make it much easier than here; as *First*, the Person has such publick Notice of it, that he has all Opportunities in the World both to secure his Person and Effects; and *Secondly*, if he be detain'd, so long as till he be reduc'd to Want on his own Oath, he shall be releiv'd and maintain'd in Prison by the Creditor.

Let the cruel Creditor do so here, that Men may not be immur'd between Stone-Walls, like wild Beasts, and starv'd to Death; that Blood may not be the Price of Debt, and Men be murder'd by the misapply'd Severities of the Law; I shall be the last Man that shall complain of the Method of imprisoning Debtors.

This Nation is not only a vastly Trading Nation, but in our Course of Trade, the prodigious Credit given by Tradesmen one to another, or by Tradesmen to Gentlemen; as it is more than is practis'd in any Nation in the World, so it is the Life and Support of that Credit, that those Debts are more easily recoverable in this Nation, than in any Part of the World: This is indeed the Reason of Personal Credit, for if a Man lives in any Kind of Figure, or has any Reputation in the World, and

I know, that he must pay me, or must not show his Face in the Streets; that he must discharge his Word, or must not come out of his Doors, that I can take him wherever I find him, and expose him to all that is mean and scandalous; I have, I say, in this Case, a much greater Satisfaction for Petty Credits, than in the other Case can be had; where if a Man please to be a Knaves, he cannot be meddled with, till he has Time to go about his Business, and let me shift for myself.

And this is not only the Support of Credit, but the Encrease of Trade; for without doubt Credit from Tradesman to Tradesman is the Foundation of that Encrease, as to Inland Commerce, which I have been talking so much of.

I do allow, what I have formerly insisted upon, of the ill Consequences of the giving Credit to Gentlemen, and it reaches nothing of this Case; but Credit in Trade certainly depends upon the Basiness of the Methods in Law to recover small Debts, and the Impossibility for a Man in Trade to keep his Credit, or keep open his Shop, and not pay his Debts.

But this is all nothing to the present Case, in which my Complaint is, not that Men may be imprison'd for Debt, but that the boundless Power of the Creditor is not restrain'd to some Limits, in which such Care might be taken of the miserable Wretch that falls into his Hand, that he may not be destroy'd, which is a general Loss to the Nation, and inconsistent with the Laws of Christianity, Reason or good Government.

Fathers and Masters may correct, but they may not kill; they may punish, but they may not destroy; Life is only in the Hand of the Magistrate, and the Law is the Bound of his Power; for to kill, is to murder in the highest Power in the World, where it is not justify'd by the Intent, as well as by the Letter of the Law.